



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ART. V. — *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams, edited from the Papers of Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury.* By GEORGE GIBBS. New York : Printed for the Subscribers. 1846. 2 vols. 8vo.

THIS work is a valuable contribution to the early political history of the United States, and we have finished the perusal of it with no ordinary degree of satisfaction. In regard either to the able and distinguished statesman whose biography it includes, or to the more general view it exhibits of the administrations of which he was a member, it must be considered as one of the most interesting works of an interesting class.

Oliver Wolcott was an admirable specimen of the New England character, such a character, indeed, as you do not often find out of New England. There is little violation of modesty in saying this, as it was not marked by any of the higher traits of genius. Sagacious, prudent, industrious, temperate and frugal, enterprising and persevering, he added to these national characteristics the personal and hereditary qualities of honesty, independence, modesty, and firmness, with purity and simplicity of manners, and great amiability of temper ; and, as if to give zest to the whole, and to show the difference between him and the other members of his family, his character was marked by a slight touch of eccentricity. His grandfather, Roger Wolcott, was descended from one of the Pilgrim fathers of New England, and was distinguished in the colony both for his civil and military services. His father, Oliver, — a name doubtless given in honor of “ Old Noll,” — served as a captain in the provincial forces of New York, in defence of the northern frontier against the French and Indians. He continued in the army from 1747 to the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. He then studied medicine, and settled at Litchfield, in Connecticut, at that period “ on the outskirts of New England civilization ” ; and by his practice, aided by the cultivation of a small farm, was enabled to marry and to rear a family, of whom the future secretary of the treasury was the first-born.

The younger Oliver Wolcott was born at Litchfield, in 1760, and acquired the rudiments of his education at the

common school of that town. In the intervals of his attendance at school, he was employed in looking after the cattle, and in the other usual occupations upon the farm. At the age of fourteen, he entered Yale College, and had for his classmates *Joel* Barlow, *Uriah* Tracy, *Zephaniah* Swift, and *Noah* Webster. The last mentioned of these village prophets and patriarchs tells us that Wolcott "was a good scholar, though not brilliant, frank and faithful in his friendships, and generous to the extent of his means"; and that "he possessed the firmness and strong reasoning powers of the Wolcott family, but with some eccentricities in his reasoning."

While he was pursuing his studies at Yale, his father, who had served in several civil offices in Connecticut, and had risen to be a general in the militia, was elected a delegate to the Continental Congress, and in that capacity signed the Declaration of Independence. He remained in Congress till the end of the war, was then made a commissioner of Indian affairs under the government of the Confederation, and after the year 1786 was annually elected lieutenant-governor of Connecticut, until 1796, when he was chosen governor, which office he held till his death, at the close of the following year. General Wolcott seems to have possessed a full measure of the qualities ascribed to his family, and his letters contained in the present publication convey a very favorable impression both of his head and heart, and do equal honor to the writer and his son, to whom they were addressed.

To return to the latter; in April, 1777, while at Litchfield on a visit to his mother, his father being absent, attending Congress, news arrived of the march of the enemy to Danbury. The young collegian was summoned to repair to the rendezvous of the militia of the neighbourhood. His mother armed him, furnished his knapsack with provisions and a blanket, and dismissed him with the charge "to conduct himself like a good soldier." The party to which he was attached had several skirmishes with the enemy during their retreat, in all of which he participated. The next year he took his first degree at Yale, and immediately commenced the study of the law at Litchfield, under Tapping Reeve, well known as the founder and head of a private law-school of great celebrity. After the destruction of Fairfield and

Norwalk, in 1779, our young soldier attended his father, as a volunteer aid, to the coast, and at the close of the expedition was offered a commission in the Continental service. This he declined, having already made some progress in his professional studies ; but he accepted an appointment at Litchfield, in the quartermaster's department, which did not materially interfere with their farther pursuit.

In January, 1781, he came of age, and was admitted to the bar. He removed shortly afterwards to Hartford, having left home with three dollars in his pocket ; this circumstance accounts for his acceptance, immediately on his arrival, of a clerkship in one of the public offices, with a salary of fifty cents a day. His diligence in this station attracted the notice of the General Assembly, who, the next year, promoted him to a higher post, as member of the central board of accounts. Here his activity and usefulness were such as to procure his further advancement to be comptroller, when that office was substituted for the board of accounts.

This early attainment of an honorable and responsible situation in public life introduced him to the society of the principal men of his own State, and to the acquaintance of many eminent men out of it. It led eventually to his appointments in the treasury of the United States, upon its organization under the present constitution, — first as auditor, afterwards as comptroller, and finally as head of the department. The first of these offices he owed to the suggestion and influence of Jeremiah Wadsworth ; the second and third, to the recommendation of Alexander Hamilton ; but neither of them to his own solicitation.

So well did Mr. Wolcott fulfil the expectations of his friends as secretary of the treasury, to which he succeeded upon the resignation of Hamilton, that he was continued in it by Mr. Adams, although known to agree in opinion with Pickering and McHenry, who were dismissed for their adherence to Hamilton in his preference of General Pinckney to Mr. Adams as a candidate for the presidency. Nor did he quit the cabinet until the second nomination of Mr. Adams, when he considered it indelicate longer to remain in it.

At this period, his whole fortune consisted of about three hundred dollars in cash, and a farm of about twenty acres upon Connecticut river, to which he retired. And yet, this man, whose conduct had been sifted again and again by his

political adversaries in Congress, and as often found unimpeachable, like that of Hamilton, his predecessor, and Pickering and McHenry, his former colleagues, was libelled by the scurrilous newspapers of the party in opposition, as having enriched himself by the plunder of the public. Hamilton, it is well known, was compelled to return to the practice of his profession for support, and left little else for his children than the inheritance of his name; Pickering was driven to the backwoods of Pennsylvania in search of a maintenance in the settlement of wild lands; and McHenry, who had previously possessed some property, spent a large portion of it in the service of the public. But not one of them was so wise in his generation as the men of this our world. They made no "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," they neither entered office in search of "spoils," nor carried any with them out of it.

We shall not be guilty of so much injustice towards them, as to compare them in other respects with their successors; we shall draw no parallel between the party to which they belonged, and that which now conducts the national government. Indeed, it seems to us almost a profanation to apply the term "party," with its modern associations, to the Federalists of the school of Washington and Hamilton. The name was given to them because they were the authors and advocates of the Federal Constitution; while that of Anti-federalists was given to the party who opposed the adoption of this instrument. The leaders of the former had borne conspicuous parts either in the cabinet or the field during the war of the Revolution. They had labored zealously to procure the adoption of the new system; and as their claims to public confidence rested on their public services, their efforts were successful. With Washington at their head, they had encountered the anarchy which succeeded the war with the same indomitable resolution and favorable result with which they had combated the enemy from without. Hence the evils springing from the conflicting views and interests of the several States, and from the feebleness of the Confederation, were rapidly disappearing under the corrective influence of the government which had superseded it.

The union being thus happily cemented by bringing its discordant materials into harmony with each other, the administration of the new government passed, almost as a mat-

ter of course, into the hands of its friends. But the vigilance and activity of its enemies, with the augmentation of their numbers from the dissatisfaction of some of the Federalists with the official arrangements and other early measures of the administration, gave to the opposition a majority in the popular branch of the new Congress. Much of the discontent had arisen from offended State pride, and from the disappointment of individuals, who, knowing that their personal consequence depended upon the power and influence of their respective States, were unwilling to transfer so large a portion of sovereign authority to the government of the Union. As they had obtained no part in the administration, they were the more disposed to regard it in the light of a foreign power, and as a substitute for the paramount jurisdiction formerly exercised by Great Britain. There were a few among them who had earned some distinction in the Revolution ; most of these had formed a part of the opposition which existed in the old Congress, and in some of the States during the war. That opposition, it will be remembered, had been directed against the authority and measures of General Washington and his friends, and was mixed up with the private cabals, in Congress and in the army, against the commander-in-chief. As a general rule, however, the men whose counsels and valor achieved the national independence were ranged on the side of the Federal Constitution, and now rallied in support of Washington's administration.

The following extract from a letter written by the elder Wolcott to his son, in 1793, gives a lively view of some of the benefits conferred by the new government upon the country, and shows of what materials the opposition to Washington's administration was then chiefly composed. The sentiments and opinions expressed do honor alike to the moral sense of the writer, and to his political sagacity.

"I have examined the statement of the Secretary of the Treasury which you sent me, and although I am not able to judge of this business in the detail, yet the energetic reasons which he has assigned for his own conduct cannot, I believe, fail of making the most convincing impressions, and fix his adversaries in a state of despondence. I never had the least doubt, both as to the abilities and rectitude of Mr. Hamilton. Indeed, a man must be uncommonly stupid, not to know that the national fiscal department must be conducted not only with regard to every species of prop-

erty within the United States, but to the whole system of commerce, and whatever has the name of property, which can have any connection with this country. The man who can take so comprehensive a view, unaided by any former national experience, as to be able to establish a system of public credit, after it was by abuse of all public faith and confidence nearly annihilated, so as within the short term of four years fully to restore and establish it upon a stable basis, and by his provident care to guard against all contingencies which might do it an injury, and by the same operation raise a people from the most torpid indolence and despondency, to a state of the most vigorous enterprise, industry, and cheerfulness, and increase the value of property within the same period one third more than it before was (which I believe has been the case within this State, notwithstanding our vast emigrations), — he who can effect all this, without imposing a sensible burden upon any one, or deranging one useful occupation or business, must possess talents and industry and a species of intuition, which will ever insure him respect and the highest esteem from all but such only as are infected by that basest and vilest of human affections, envy. In this State I never heard any one speak of Mr. Hamilton but in terms of respect, and the same of the officers of his department. I shall furnish a number of gentlemen in this part of the State with the reading of the fiscal statement which you sent me; for, although we are very quiet and confiding in the rectitude of the national administration, yet there are some who wish to have it otherwise (or I am mistaken), if they dare make the attempt; — at present, they dare not.

“I have observed that gentlemen who have been for some time in Philadelphia seem to have very disagreeable apprehensions lest there should be some subversion of the national government. This I can more easily account for, as I never was six months in Philadelphia during the war, but what I had different apprehensions, and those very disagreeable ones, relative to the state of the Union, from what I had upon my return there after a few months’ absence; and I always found that to be the case in regard to every other member of Congress. Indeed, if they had not been frequently supplied with fresh hands, the condition of the members would have been intolerable. You will always judge right, if you believe that the vast body of the people who live north and back of that place are of emphatically different character from those who compose that factious, ignorant, and turbulent town. I believe that there is not one in fifty in New England but what will support the present government (in which computation I include Vermont, and also reckon Parson Niles and some hysterical politicians in Boston), and I believe that there is

not more than one in twenty north of the Delaware ; Maryland, if I mistake not, will do the same. If, at any future period, our southern friends shall incline to dissolve the Union, they must count upon the Potomac and the Ohio as the line of division. This part of the Union will not adopt the French ideas of jurisprudence. I believe before the year 1800, Congress will be very willing to go to Conogochegue, or any other place, so that they can leave Philadelphia ; not but that one half of the bustle and turbulence of that town is a mere matter of affectation and pride, and more owing to habitual security than any serious wish to obtain what they seem to aim at.

“ The French are in a state of extreme delirium and extreme wretchedness. They will suffer all the miseries which war can inflict, and in its consequences, probably, famine and the pestilence. The avowed designs of the late European congress to give France a king will occasion serious reflection in the minds of millions of the Old World. The combination of kings to maintain despotism through Europe is a question which will, within no distant period, be further discussed in the Old World.” — Vol. i., pp. 101, 102.

When the beneficial operation of the new government in the hands of the Federalists had become manifest, their adversaries, conscious of the odium attached to the name of “ Antifederalists,” endeavoured to substitute for it that of “ Republicans,” which, when the French Revolution broke out, they again exchanged for that of “ Democrats,” and attempted, in further imitation of the French Jacobins, to fix the name of “ Aristocrats ” upon the Federalists. But as the people of the New England States were confessedly the most democratic, and those of Virginia and the other Antifederal States of the South undeniably the most aristocratic, portions of the union, this attempt failed. Their next effort was to render the name of Federalist odious, and in this they succeeded. But the means to which they had recourse would have proved quite insufficient, had they not been aided by a division among the Federalists themselves. Some of the remarks of Mr. Gibbs upon the position of the Federalists at this period are so just and striking, that we will place them before our readers.

“ The period during which the Federalists held the ascendancy in the administration of the national government was one of no ordinary trial. The system itself was a novelty, founded in the midst of dissentient opinions, and established in the face of power-

ful opposition ; its parts were to be adjusted and arranged, its proper attributes and limits settled and defined, the relations of the individual members with the whole to be harmonized, and the great and complicated machine to be set in motion. Besides the necessity of thus creating from a mass of disorganized materials the framework of society itself, and of establishing the details of its functions ; of devising a system of finance, by which, from a family of states hitherto unused to any general and common system, revenues should be raised, bearing equally upon all, revenues capable of meeting debts of extraordinary magnitude for a people of limited numbers, whose resources had never been developed, and who were already exhausted by a long war ; of adopting plans of state policy under novel circumstances and relations, expansive as the growth of the nation, and to be permanent as its existence ; of embodying laws ; of rebuilding commerce from its wrecks, and calling forth arts and manufactures where they had been unknown ; there were other obstacles in their path. Almost coeval with its birth commenced a war, which, in extent, magnitude, and objects, was the most gigantic in the history of bloodshed. Institutions hoary with age and venerable from their sanctity ; empires which had seemed as permanent as the existence of man ; despotisms whose iron grasp had for centuries stifled the very breathings of liberty ; laws, and usages stronger than laws, which for good or evil had moulded men after their own fashion ; priestcrafts and castes, obeyed by prescription, were at once swept away before the whirlwind of revolution. The effects of this convulsion had not been confined to the shores of Europe or the east ; they had extended to America also. Here, meanwhile, the same opposition which had exerted itself against the formation of a government was continued against its operation. It was with mutiny in the crew that the Federalists had to steer the ship of state through the dangers of an unexplored ocean, in this the most tremendous storm which ever devastated the civilized world. Every measure which might tend to a development of the power of the general government was resisted. Every embarrassment was thrown in the way of its action. The impatience which naturally arises from new burdens was taken advantage of, though their object was to pay the price of freedom itself. Sedition was stirred up to resist them. Falsehood and misrepresentation were employed ; distrust excited against tried and firm patriots. The personal popularity of demagogues was used to ruin men whose purity would not permit them to court the passions of the multitude. Alien influence was sought out to thwart or to govern the citizen. The national feeling in favor of republicanism, on the one hand, and

national detestation of monarchy, on the other, were invoked to render odious an administration which refused to sacrifice the peace of their own to the interests or the ambition of a foreign land; the dread of war with France was held up as a bugbear to the timid, the fear of subjection to Britain as a spectre to the patriot. Public gratitude and popular hatred were alike aroused and called to aid.

“There was undoubtedly an exciting influence, which rendered the attacks of the opposition upon the government more potent than they otherwise might have been, arising from the character of the people themselves. The sagacity of the Anti-federal leaders fully saw and appreciated the fact so truly expressed by Mr. Cabot, ‘that the sentiments of the people were essentially democratic, the constitution of the government was only republican.’ The distinction was a vital one. There existed undoubtedly then, as perhaps to a more general though not more aggravated degree there exists now, a disposition to set up popular will above the laws made by the representatives of the people, to create as it were a law paramount to the fundamental laws of the land, a law uncertain, intangible, depending upon fluctuating and excited passions, and whose being is alike without authority or responsibility. This ultra-democratic tendency had been firmly and consistently resisted by the Federal party; it had been as sedulously cultivated by their enemies. It was the fulcrum upon which rested the lever which was to overthrow the original system of American policy.

“The ground on which the opposition succeeded in putting the contest was undoubtedly the strongest they could have taken. There is that in the character of the democratic theory which recommends it to the imagination of many classes. Not the poorer class alone, who expect in its prevalence greater advantages to themselves, or at least greater control over the rich, — not the demagogue only, who hopes in its success the gratification of a selfish ambition, — but men of a higher order, both of intellect and of character, rank among its disciples. The visionary, who looks for truth in abstractions instead of experience, — the philanthropist, dreaming of the perfections of his race, — often, too, the patriot, in his indignation at the tyranny of the few, seeking a refuge for liberty in an opposite and as dangerous extreme; are its advocates and adherents.” — Vol. II., pp. 503–507.

For obvious reasons, we cannot trace the history of those dissensions in the administration party which did more than the malice of their opponents to ruin the Federalist cause.

Mr. Adams succeeded to the presidency, but did not command in full measure the esteem and confidence of the very persons who had elected him. He soon found that the opinions of Hamilton had more weight with them than his own, and that even the members of his own cabinet, whom he had continued in office after Washington's resignation, sought counsel and direction from this master-spirit of the Federalist party. Prompt, decided, and even imperious in disposition, he resolved to be the sole guide of the policy of his own administration, or at any rate to choose his own counsellors. The breach between him and Hamilton grew wider every day, and their mutual jealousy was inflamed by the exasperating language used by their respective adherents. The quarrel came at last to a head, through a determination which the president formed, early in 1799, without consulting the heads of department, or even intimating his intention to them, to send a third embassy to France, in the hope of conciliating that power, and averting the danger of an open war between the two countries, which had long seemed imminent. Most of the Federalists viewed this step with extreme disapprobation, considering it as ill-timed and humiliating to the United States, after the gross contumely and contemptuous disregard of the laws of nations with which the French Directory had received the two preceding embassies. They believed that no honorable peace could be made with France under its feeble and distracted government, and that any treaty which might be framed would only give serious umbrage to Great Britain, expose our growing commerce to new and more serious hazards, and open the way for a wider diffusion of French Jacobinical principles in America. Three members of the cabinet, at least, Pickering, McHenry, and Wolcott, viewed the mission as impolitic and unwise. Among a large and influential portion of the Federalists, with Hamilton at their head, it was so strongly condemned, that every one foresaw at the time that there could be no zealous and united effort of the party in the ensuing election of a president. Mr. Adams was again nominated, but all the forces could not be rallied to his support.

The following remarks of Mr. Gibbs, upon a great loss which the country suffered at this time, seem to be perfectly true and very happily expressed.

“At this moment WASHINGTON died. At no period of his long

and useful life had the weight of his name and character been more wanted ; never could his loss have been a greater public affliction. While he remained, the Federalists knew that they had yet a rallying-point round which they could gather ; a leader whose firmness was unshaken, and upon whose wisdom they could always implicitly rely. His death hushed for a moment even the violence of the political storm, but they felt in that pause that the sheet-anchor of the ship of state had parted its fastenings. Those who have followed the early history of this country must have seen, and seen with pain, how much of its safety, how much of its virtue, depended upon the influence of a single name, on the popularity of a single individual. Disguise it as we may, the fate of the constitutional government would have been more than doubtful, had its infancy been committed to the care of another ; and there is too much reason to believe, that, even after his immediate guardianship had ceased, his earlier death would have involved its destruction also." — Vol. II., p. 10.

Subsequent events contributed nothing to heal these internal wounds of the party. The president refused to make Hamilton general-in-chief of the army after the death of Washington, to whom he had been second in command. Two of the recusant secretaries were dismissed from office, and Wolcott, the only remaining one, soon afterwards resigned. The Federalists still had a majority in Congress, but were paralyzed in action by a want of union in their ranks, and a feeling of depression generally prevailed. Hamilton endeavoured to restore harmony by advising the party to give an equal vote to their second candidate, General Pinckney, and thus allow the House of Representatives to choose between him and Mr. Adams. With this view, he prepared, and printed for private circulation, his celebrated "Letter concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams." A copy of this pamphlet was surreptitiously obtained and made public, and the breach became wider than ever. The natural result followed this open dissension in the party at such a critical moment. Jefferson and Burr were elected over Adams and Pinckney ; but these two had an equal number of votes, and it remained for the Representatives to decide between them. The Federalists then committed their last blunder by strenuously attempting, in opposition to the urgent advice of Hamilton, to elect Burr instead of Jefferson to the office of president. They failed, and the reins of power fell from their hands, never to be resumed. The name of the

great party which framed, adopted, and carried into effect the constitution of this country, which had Washington for its head, and the fathers of the Revolution for its counsellors, has become, in the mouths of a great part of the people of the United States, a byword and a reproach. It has been dead for a quarter of a century, but the time has not yet arrived for writing its epitaph.

The most interesting and valuable portion of Mr. Gibbs's work is the correspondence of which it principally consists. Besides the letters of Wolcott himself, it comprises those addressed to him by Washington, Adams, Hamilton, Cabot, Ames, Ellsworth, King, Pickering, McHenry, Trumbull, Goodhue, Hillhouse, Sedgwick, Goodrich, and other conspicuous members of the Federal party, during the period of its ascendancy, and its decline and fall. The most attractive, perhaps, is the correspondence between Mr. Wolcott and his father, and other members of his family; and none certainly exhibit his private and domestic life in a more favorable light than his letters to his wife. Upon reviewing the whole correspondence, the reader will not fail to remark, what might indeed have been predicted from the characters of the men, that it tends to exalt them in public opinion as much as the publication of Mr. Jefferson's letters has exposed and degraded him. We confess we were nearly as much surprised as gratified to find in the letters of Hamilton so full a refutation of the calumnies and vituperation of which that great man was so frequently the object. We regret that our limits forbid our transcribing several of these *in extenso*,—more especially as they give so favorable an impression of the wisdom and honesty of his career as a statesman, and of the amiability and disinterestedness of his character as a man.

He it was whom the leaders of the opposite party accused of devotion to Great Britain, of hostility to France, and of attachment to monarchical principles. Yet when the British government, while the ratification of Mr. Jay's treaty was pending, issued an order in council prohibiting neutral vessels from carrying provisions into France, Hamilton endeavoured to prevent the ratification until the order was rescinded; and even if the order should be rescinded, he recommended that a remonstrance should accompany it, as a protest against the principle assumed in the order.

“I incline very much to the opinion that this will be the proper

course of conduct in reference to the order to seize our vessels with provisions, viz. : to send to our agent the treaty ratified, as advised by the Senate, with this instruction, — that, if the order for seizing provisions is in force when he receives it, he is to inform the British minister that he has the treaty ratified, but that he is instructed not to exchange the ratification till that order is rescinded, since the United States cannot even give an implied sanction to the principle. At the same time a remonstrance ought to go from this country, well considered and well digested, even to a word, to be delivered against the principle of the order. My reasons for this opinion are summarily these :

“1. That in fact we are too much interested in the exemption of provisions from seizure to give even an implied sanction to the contrary pretension.

“2. That the exchange of ratifications, pending such an order, would give color to an abusive construction of the eighteenth article of the treaty, as though it admitted of the seizure of provisions.

“3. That this would give cause of umbrage to France, because it would be more than merely to refrain from resisting by force an innovation injurious to her, but it would be to give a sanction to it in the midst of a war.

“4. It would be thus construed in our country, and would destroy confidence in the government.

“5. It would be scarcely reputable to a nation to conclude a treaty with a power to heal past controversies, at the very moment of a new and existing violation of its rights. Yours truly,

A. HAMILTON.

“If an order had existed and has been rescinded, the remonstrance ought still to be presented after the exchange of ratifications, as a protest against the principle, &c.” — Vol. I., pp. 223, 224.

When the English minister complained of an article in one of our Indian treaties, as repugnant to certain stipulations entered into by the Indians with his government respecting their trade, Hamilton declared the ministry of Great Britain to be “as great fools as our Jacobins.”* When the British men-of-war began impressing our seamen, Hamilton expressed to the Federal government his hopes that “a very serious remonstrance had long since gone against the wanton” practice ; and added, that in his opinion it would “be an error to be too tame with that overbearing cabinet.”† On this subject,

* Vol. I., p. 329.

† Ibid., p. 330.

indeed, it is evident that he felt more keenly than his accusers ; for when the French envoy, Adet, reproached our government for submitting to the searching of our vessels by British cruisers for seamen, and his interference had been repelled by the secretary of state, Hamilton wrote to Wolcott that he did not think “ the position assumed by Mr. Pickering true, — that France had no right to interfere. I am of opinion, that, whenever a neutral power suffers liberties to be taken with it by a belligerent one, which turn to the detriment of the other belligerent party, as the acquiring strength by impressing seamen, there is good ground of inquiry, demanding candid explanation.” * When, under the administration of the elder Adams, the aggressions of France upon our commerce had induced the president, with a view of recommending retaliatory measures, to convene Congress at an extraordinary session, Hamilton, in his celebrated letter on the conduct of Mr. Adams, proves, by appealing to his own conduct at the time, in reference to our difficulties with France, that he was more anxious to put an end to them than any member of the administration. He states, that, “ after the rejection of Mr. Pickering by the government of France, immediately after the instalment of Mr. Adams as president, and long before the measure was taken, I urged a member of Congress, † then high in the confidence of the president, to propose to him the immediate appointment of three commissioners, of whom Mr. Jefferson or Mr. Madison should be one, to make another attempt to negotiate.” ‡ And in corroboration of this, we find he expresses to Wolcott his sentiments on this subject at large.

“ Every one who can properly appreciate the situation of our affairs at this moment, in all the extent of possible circumstances, must be extremely anxious for a course of conduct in our government which will unite the utmost prudence with energy. It has been a considerable time my wish that a commission extraordinary § should be constituted to go to France, to *explain, demand, negotiate, &c.* I was particularly anxious that the first measure of the present president’s administration should have been that, but it has not happened. I now continue to wish earnestly that

* Vol. I., p. 393.

† Uriah Tracy, a Senator from Connecticut.

‡ See Vol. I., p. 483.

§ In the margin is written, “ Madison, Pinckney, Cabot.”

the same measure may go into effect, and that the meeting of the Senate may be accelerated for that purpose. Without opening a new channel of negotiation, it seems to me the door of accommodation is shut, and rupture will follow, if not prevented by a general peace. Who, indeed, can be certain that a general pacification of Europe may not leave us alone to receive the law from France? Will it be wise to omit any thing to parry, if possible, these great risks? Perhaps the Directory have declared that they will not receive a minister till their grievances shall have been redressed! This can hardly mean more than that they will not receive a residing minister. It cannot mean that they will not hear an extraordinary messenger, who may even be sent to know what will satisfy. Suppose they do. It will still be well to convince the people that the government has done all in its power, and that the Directory are unreasonable.

"But the enemies of the government call for the measure. To me this is a very strong reason for pursuing it. It will meet them on their own ground, and disarm them of the plea that something has been omitted.

"I ought, my good friend, to apprise you, for you may learn it from no other, that a suspicion begins to dawn among the friends of the government that the actual administration (ministers) is not averse from war with France. How very important to obviate this!" — Vol. I., pp. 484, 485.

In a subsequent letter, he says, — "We ought to do every thing to avoid rupture without unworthy sacrifices, and to keep in view the primary object, union at home. No measure can tend more to this than an extraordinary mission. And it is certain, that, to fulfil these ends, it ought to embrace a character in whom France and the opposition have full credit." He was nevertheless "clearly of opinion, that the president should come forward to Congress in a manly tone, and that Congress should adopt vigorous defensive measures."* Again, after the meeting of Congress, he observes of the incipient measures, — "I like very well the course of Executive conduct in regard to the controversy with France, and I like the answer of the Senate to the president's speech; but I confess I have not been well satisfied with the answer reported to the House. It contains too many hard expressions; and hard words are very rarely useful in public proceedings. Mr. Jay and other friends here [New York] have been struck in the same manner with myself."†

* See Vol. I., pp. 489, 490.

† Ibid., pp. 543, 544.

These letters, and the sentiments of the writer expressed in them, were doubtless unknown to the leaders of the opposition. That Mr. Jefferson and his satellites should have charged him with little short of a treasonable attachment to Great Britain, and, as a consequence of it, with an inveterate hostility to France, is therefore not to be wondered at; we remember the tactics to which parties too frequently resort.

So, too, in the succeeding year, when the seditious conduct of certain partisans of the opposition was brought by the president to the notice of Congress, who were induced to legislate against it, we find Hamilton, the imputed advocate of arbitrary power, declaring that there were provisions in the bill, which, according to a cursory view, appeared to be highly exceptionable, and such as more than any thing else might endanger civil war.

“I hope sincerely the thing may not be hurried through. **LET US NOT ESTABLISH TYRANNY.** Energy is a very different thing from violence. If we make no false step, we shall be essentially united; but if we push things to an extreme, we shall then give to faction body and solidity.” — Vol. II., p. 68.

He was charged, too, with hostility to State rights; but, a subject materially affecting them, he declares himself in language which we earnestly recommend to the consideration of our present ruling powers. “The idea,” he says, “of the late president’s [Washington’s] administration, of considering the governor of each State as the first general of the militia, and its immediate organ in acting upon the militia, was wisely considered, and in my opinion wisely adopted, and well to be adhered to.” *

But enough; these instances are sufficient for our purpose, and, one would suppose, sufficient to have silenced his accusers for ever. Their malice pursued him to the grave; and although the person by whom he met his death ceased to utter these slanders for a season, they were afterwards revived in the miserable party controversies of a later day. Is it too much to hope that they now may be permitted to sleep for ever?

When the presidential election of 1800 had resulted in an

* Vol. II., p. 229.

equal vote for Jefferson and Burr, the personal interference and influence of Hamilton, it is well known, were exerted on the side of the former, and there can no longer remain a doubt, that they settled the question in his favor. Hamilton acted on this occasion, as on all others, with a single eye to what he deemed the honor and welfare of his country, regardless of his own private interests, predilections, or enmities, or those of his friends. From the moment of his meeting Mr. Jefferson in the cabinet of General Washington, the latter had been compelled to feel, and eventually to yield to, the superiority of his rival, towards whom he thenceforward cherished a bitter personal as well as political animosity. Hamilton, on his part, did not take pains to conceal his repugnance to the principles and character of Jefferson. He looked upon him as a visionary, but dangerous, theorist in morals and politics, as a dabbler in literature and science, and a hypocrite in every thing but religion, which, as a disciple of the school of Voltaire, he had affected to ridicule, with the malice, but not the wit, of his master. The two men were, in fact, as much opposed to each other in their private characters and opinions as in their public principles and conduct. But the one brooded in secret over his resentments, while the other, with the frankness of a soldier, as well as the native candor of the man, on all proper occasions avowed his sentiments, without any other restraints than those imposed by delicacy and honor. He carried, indeed, his heart in his hand, and it is not surprising that foul birds should have pecked at it. His character, however, has survived the calumnies of his enemies, many of whom professed to have buried their resentment in his untimely grave ; but whether actuated by sincere veneration of the deceased, or by hostility to his murderer, is known only to the searcher of all hearts. But as the malicious attacks of his enemies could make no impression injurious to the character of Hamilton, so neither could their eulogies add one jot or tittle to his fame. So rich a combination of excellence, both of head and heart, of intellectual, moral, and social qualities, of various talents and knowledge, of native genius and practical ability, of private integrity and public virtue, has seldom appeared in any age or country. True it is, he had his faults, for he was a man ; but considered as a statesman and a patriot, we ne'er shall look upon him like again.

Contrasted with Burr, his character appears in a somewhat different, but still more striking and favorable, light. Their relative position and feelings were widely different from those of Hamilton and Jefferson. Although, from dislike or suspicion of Burr, Hamilton had always avoided an intimacy with him, they had been fellow-soldiers in the Revolution, and fellow-citizens both before and afterwards. They were members of the same profession, and practised for many years at the same bar. In their mutual intercourse, they had always treated each other with the courtesy of gentlemen; nor were they ever known to have a personal difference before that leading to the fatal rencontre between them. And what was the origin of that lamentable catastrophe, but the preference given to Jefferson by Hamilton in the contested election of 1800, — a preference given to one whom he knew to be his enemy, over one whom he regarded merely as a political opponent, and did not suspect of personal ill-will towards him? Yet, when the question between Burr and Jefferson was pending in Congress, Hamilton interfered zealously and openly in favor of the latter, and unquestionably determined the choice of the House of Representatives. To this interference Jefferson owed his election, Hamilton his death; and through this singular fatality was the life of this great and good man sacrificed by his magnanimity towards an inveterate enemy, and by a devotion to the welfare of his country superior to all private and personal impulses of interest or passion.

We cannot close our remarks upon this valuable contribution to our political history, without expressing our thanks to the editor for the gratification its perusal has afforded us, and for the obligation he has conferred on every friend of sound principles and enlightened policy by its publication. The monument he has erected to departed Federalism will serve not only to perpetuate the honors due to its memory, and to that of his relative among the rest of its worthiest disciples, but, by inscribing his own name on the pedestal, to identify his reputation with theirs. May it prove also a beacon to guide his contemporaries in the only path that leads public men to honorable distinction, and their country to true glory!